



State of South Carolina
Office of The Lieutenant Governor

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Aging Awards Honor Contributions by Presbyterian Minister, Branchville Mayor, McClellanville “Garbage Man” and Past Speaker of Silver Haired Legislature

(Columbia, SC) Recipients of this year’s Lt. Governor’s Office on Aging awards include a Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian minister who spearheaded an independent transportation network in the Trident, the mayor of Branchville whose efforts reopened a shuttered congregate dining site, the “Garbage Man” of McClellanville, and the immediate past speaker of the South Carolina Silver Haired Legislature.

“In a continuing effort to stimulate public perception of issues confronting our state’s 1.3 million baby boomers, the Lt. Governor’s Office on Aging annually presents awards that acknowledge contributions by South Carolinians to the policies and programs that help meet our aging population’s health needs and support a sustainable and independent quality of life,” said Lt. Governor André Bauer in announcing the awards.

The Outstanding Older South Carolinian of 2007 is the Rev. Richard K. Giffen of Mt. Pleasant. Rev. Giffen was nominated for working tirelessly over the years volunteering for numerous organizations as a champion of senior needs with the goal of enhancing the quality of life for older adults. He has used his experience and talents to work with government agencies and non-profit organizations to bring much needed funding to programs in the Trident area to help seniors age successfully in their community.

His efforts to create the Grocery GoFor program provided homebound seniors with transportation to the grocery store and other errands allowing them to maintain their independence, along with friendly visits from volunteers who came with a smiling face and pleasant conversation. While serving in Silver Haired Legislature, Rev. Giffen provided leadership as the chairman of the Trident Caucus and offered moral guidance as its chaplain. The past pastor of Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church helped found the

ITNCharlestonTrident non-profit transportation service for people 65 and older and the visually impaired. ITN provides door-through-door rides, 24/7, 365 days a year using volunteer drivers. For more information, please see <http://itncharlestontrident.org/>

West Columbia's Tom Lloyd, immediate past speaker of the Silver Haired Legislature, is the recipient of the 2007 Leadership in Aging Award. Since 2001, Mr. Lloyd has worked tirelessly as an advocate for the elderly of South Carolina, chairing the Central Midlands Council of Governments Caucus and serving as the speaker of the Silver Haired Legislature from 2003-2007.

During his tenure, the Silver Haired Legislature urged and obtained passage of an expansion of the Long Term Care Ombudsmen program and the implementation of the Volunteer Ombudsman Program, now known as Friendly Visitors. Prior to and during his work as a Silver Haired Legislator, Mr. Lloyd volunteered for more than five years bringing home delivered meals for the Lexington County Recreation and Aging Commission.

Branchville Mayor Tim Cooner is the recipient of the 2007 Network Impact Award. Ten years ago, dwindling participation in the congregate feeding program in Branchville led to closure of that program. Mayor Tim Cooner noticed that many of the seniors in his community were lacking in proper nutrition and decided to take the initiative to reestablish the congregate meal program. Upon gathering the names of 60 seniors in the community who wanted to participate in the program, Mayor Cooner approached the Orangeburg County Council on Aging for support. The OCCA agreed that there was indeed a need for a nutrition program in Branchville, but at the time there were insufficient funds to make the program a reality. When the State Legislature appropriated \$2.9 million for nutrition programs, Mayor Cooner joined with the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging, the OCCA, and the Lower Savannah Council of Government to secure funding. Through his tireless efforts the congregate feeding program resumed services in Branchville on January 2, 2007 and there are now 75 participants in the program.

Mayor Cooner is now soliciting bi-partisan support in the Legislature to expand the program further as they are already servicing more seniors than state funds could support. It is through the "we'll make it work" philosophy that the program was revitalized, and due to his efforts the seniors of Branchville will continue to age successfully.

The South Carolina Business and Aging Award goes to the Lowcountry Senior Network, an alliance of businesses, non-profit organizations and government organizations that focuses on addressing the needs of seniors in the Lowcountry of South Carolina, specifically Berkley, Charleston and Dorchester counties. For more information, see <http://www.lowcountrysn.com/> Each year the Network hosts a Senior Expo to showcase products and services that benefit area seniors. Since 2005, over 2,000 seniors and their families and caregivers have attended the Expo to learn about issues and challenges facing Lowcountry seniors.

In an effort to help seniors deal with the extreme heat of the Lowcountry summer, the LSN started Project Cool Breeze to provide air conditioning units to at-risk seniors. During 2006, the LSN was able to raise funds to purchase and donate 51 units to area seniors greatly increasing their quality of life. During the last holiday season, the LSN was able to provide 100 presents to area seniors through the Angel Tree Initiative, and also donated funds to provide holiday meals to 71 homebound seniors.

James Simmons of McClellanville is the recipient of the 2007 Volunteer Service Award. In McClellanville, there is no public sanitation service, so residents are required to carry their garbage to the dump. Mr. Simmons started out by occasionally carrying his elderly neighbors' garbage with him once a week when he took his own, but when he realized that there were many other seniors in the community in the same situation he started doing more. Over a five year period, Mr. Simmons upgraded the capacity of his pickup truck to carry additional weight, and now he is picking up the garbage from over 100 McClellanville seniors Monday through Thursday at his own expense. Even with the escalating price of fuel, Mr. Simmons refuses to take donations for his efforts saying that it is "his ministry from God" to help his neighbors in this way. The seniors of McClellanville have affectionately given Mr. Simmons the nickname "Garbage Man" for his selfless efforts, which brings acknowledged joy to him.

Mr. Simmons also provides transportation to area seniors and leads the weekly devotional at the South Santee Senior Center on Wednesdays after he has picked up the garbage. It goes without saying that Mr. Simmons epitomizes the spirit of volunteerism and is a true asset to the community of McClellanville.

The 2007 Outstanding Youth Volunteer Award is presented to Southside Christian School in Greenville, where the students have taken it upon themselves to reach out to older adults in their area in an attempt to bridge the gap between generations. Though there is no official name for the program, as many as 90 Southside Christian students have visited the Alterra, Brighton Gardens, Southern Oaks and Greenville Assisted Living care facilities in the Upstate on a regular basis. The students have joined the seniors in activities like bingo, singing, planting flowers and have preformed musical and dramatic performances.

South Carolina Educational Television receives the 2007 Health Promotion for Older South Carolinians Award for producing the information program, "Countdown to Better Care" designed to inform and educate seniors about the steps they can take to improve their own healthcare, reduce medical errors and improve their safety. "Countdown to Better Care" was broadcast five times statewide and is now part of the ETV video library for rebroadcast. The program was also shown throughout the day at the SCETV exhibit on Senior Citizens Day during the 2006 South Carolina State Fair in Columbia.

The South Santee Senior Center received the 2007 Outstanding Community Intergenerational Award. Over the past five years a unique program at the South Santee Senior Center has helped bridge the generation gap between youth and seniors in McClellanville. The senior center has changed its focus from serving only seniors to acting as an unofficial Boys and Girls Club, providing a safe environment for area youth to do homework and enjoy recreational opportunities. Many of the children that spend time at the center have parents that commute over 80 miles to work each day, and would be at home unsupervised if it was not for their senior mentors. The seniors at the Santee Senior Center rejoice in the fact that the children are now getting the attention that they need as well as help with their homework from not only the seniors but also trained tutors that are brought in to help the children. The relationship being developed between the youth and seniors of McClellanville is mutually beneficial. The seniors benefit from the company that the children provide, and the children benefit as well by having access to "living history lessons" from people that helped make the history the children only read about in books before.

Five 2007 Media Awards are being presented. WCBD Channel 2 in Charleston keeps seniors and their families in its viewing area informed about the issues impacting their daily lives. Time again the management and reporters of WCBD have run stories involving senior

issues including: Medicare Part D enrollment; the Social Security Administration's Low Income Subsidy (LIS) program and long-term care. To further support their commitment to the community WCBD sponsored a phone bank allowing seniors to call in and speak with experts on Part D and/or LIS. This segment helped to provide answers to roughly 1,600 callers and brought senior issues to the attention of the 500,000 individuals in the WCBD viewing area.

Proctor Bright, author of *Whistle for the Wind*, was nominated as a fine example of the drive and ingenuity of the greatest generation. Mr. Bright has been a community activist since the 1950's contributing to the Civil Rights Movement and opening lines of communication between the races. As a member of the Jasper County Tax Assessors Board, Mr. Bright fought for fair and equitable taxation. In his book, *Whistle for the Wind*, Mr. Bright chronicles his life and the struggles to make a better life for both his family and community. "Whistle for the Wind" serves as a link between generations, sharing stories from the past with future generations helping explain the struggles previous generations faced to make our country what it is today.

Betsy Finklea, editor of *The Dillon Herald*, has a firm commitment to keeping readers informed about the issues impacting their daily lives. Time again *The Dillon Herald* has run stories involving senior issues on the front page and has reprinted articles she felt were of particular importance in *The Dillon County Shopper*, a free publication mailed to all households in Dillon County and the surrounding area. Ms. Finklea has demonstrated her desire to keep seniors informed by covering news releases issued by the Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging, the Dillon County Council on Aging and the local chapter of the AARP. To further support their commitment to the senior community, *The Dillon Herald* encourages seniors to serve as guest columnists by providing letters and articles on issues they feel might help area seniors age successfully.

Greenville's WMUU 1260-AM regularly runs stories involving senior issues and also has a monthly program, *Senior Focus*, which provides updates on the most pertinent topics in the lives of seniors.

Crystal Schafer, publisher of *Senior Living Resource Magazine*, keeps readers informed about aging issues that impact their daily lives. Time again *Senior Living Resource Magazine* has run articles involving senior issues and provides information on service providers that can assist in successful aging.

Nomination forms for the 2008 Aging Awards will be posted next month on the website of the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, www.aging.sc.gov

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